

Chapter 13

FWS Training & Qualifications Information

[Link to Redbook Chapter 13](#)

B. Policy

All personnel funded with fire funds who are hired under a position description containing firefighting duties will also meet PMS 310-1 requirements for the appropriate fire position. Individuals will not be assigned to duties for which they lack training and qualification.

1. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Exceptions – Refuges which do not have dedicated fire personnel, normally have a light wildland fire workload (minimal occurrence and acreage), do not perform initial actions using direct attack with hand tools, and have no cooperators/contractors to perform timely initial actions on refuge wildland fires can request an exception to NWCG fitness requirements for personnel classified as Firefighter Type 2, Firefighter Type 1, or Incident Commander Type 5. The request is to be made to the Regional Office and will involve review by the Regional Fire Management Coordinator and approval at the Regional Office level. Exception approvals are to be documented in the Refuge Fire Management Plan.

Factors that must be addressed within the request include but are not limited to: fuels, terrain, and tactics employed. Exceptions may be granted where wildland fires occur in light fuels over gentle terrain and initial actions using equipment such as dozers, tractor plows, and engines, as opposed to direct attack with hand tools, are performed. Refuges that demonstrate that an arduous physical fitness rating is not necessary to safely perform initial actions on a wildland fire may use **nonfire personnel** who qualify at the "Moderate" level to perform initial actions.

Exceptions will apply only to initial actions. Should a wildland fire become an extended attack incident (Type III) where interagency personnel are requested through the mobilization system, NWCG wildland fire qualified personnel will be used. No exceptions from arduous fitness levels are allowed for personnel hired as primary firefighters.

Service prescribed fire physical fitness standards are determined based on the fitness definitions in the PMS 310-1, fuel type, terrain, and prescribed fire tactics normally used on the Refuge. Prescribed fire fitness standards may differ from wildland fire fitness standards because prescribed fire activities are a management action and the pace of work is normally set by individuals as opposed to an emergency situation in which the pace of work is generally set by the emergency situation.

Nonfire personnel participating in prescribed fire activities on Refuges which have gentle terrain and light to moderate fuel loads are required to attain a "Moderate" physical fitness rating as defined in the PMS 310-1. Physical fitness levels for the RXM1&2, RXB1&2 and RXI1&2 positions are not established by the NWCG.

The agencies have established physical fitness levels for these positions and moderate is the standard fitness level for Service prescribed fire operations.

Exceptions to the standard are necessary when a Refuge analysis of prescribed fire operations reveals that terrain, tactics and fuels present require physical fitness standards more restrictive than a "Moderate" standard for a specific prescribed fire project. Refuge personnel will meet the highest physical fitness category required to safely conduct prescribed fire operations on the Refuge, determined by terrain, tactics and fuels.

The Regional Office, through the Regional Fire Management Coordinator and other personnel as designated, may review individual refuges or use an ecosystem approach to making the determination as to acceptable fitness levels for prescribed fire. Fitness levels should be documented in the Refuge Fire Management Plan.

2. Fire Management Curriculum - The curriculum supporting fire management qualifications and position certification is explained in detail in the [Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System Guide](#), PMS 310-1. Details relating to course descriptions and trainee/instructor qualifications are provided in the [NWCG Field Manager's Course Guide](#), PMS 901-1 (NFES 2194). Training needs analyses are developed each year at refuge, regional and national levels. A refuge or region is responsible for sponsoring 100 and 200 level courses. The Regional Fire Management Coordinator (RFMC) determines intermediate level (300 and 400) training needs. National level (500 and 600) training needs are determined by the Fire Management Branch. Their respective Regional Fire Management Coordinator will nominate employees identified for national level training. Regional nominations should be consistent with regional or geographic board direction. Nominations for intermediate level courses should be routed to Regional Fire Management Coordinators for prioritization. Each course lead instructor provides successful trainees with certificates of completion upon conclusion of the course. All NWCG-approved training packages and course materials are readily available through the Publications Management System at the National Interagency Fire Center. NWCG [National Fire Equipment System Catalog Part 2: Publications](#), PMS 449-2 (NFES 3362), identifies all materials and ordering procedures and is updated each spring.
3. Fire Management Instructors - Each Region is responsible for the selection, training, and certification of an adequate number of Fish and Wildlife Service instructors for fire management training. The funding for fire training instructors for local and geographic area level courses is a local or Regional fire management responsibility. The funding for fire training instructors for national level courses is a responsibility of the Fire Management Branch.
4. [Incident Qualifications and Certification System](#) - The Refuge Fire Management Officer is responsible for input and maintenance of all pertinent refuge employee data and for ensuring that employees are trained, qualified, and certified at levels which meet preplanned needs for appropriate management response, initial attack and prescribed fire, and for ensuring the accuracy of annual Incident Qualification Cards. The Certifying Official (i.e. Refuge Manager or Project Leader) confirms through the issuance of an incident qualification card that an individual is

qualified to perform in a specified position. The Incident Qualification Card has a currency of 12 months.

5. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Standards - All Service personnel who perform on-line wildland or prescribed fire duties must have the following NWCG courses: S-130 Basic Firefighter and S-190 Introduction to Fire Behavior, plus fire shelter training. An annual 8 hour safety refresher course covering the Standard Fire Orders, 18 Watch Out Situations, and fire shelter deployment inspection deployment, entrapments, other hazards, and current safety issues is required. All personnel hired as primary firefighters must meet the arduous fitness standard to maintain full fire funding and if the position is career status, arduous is required to meet special retirement considerations for fire.

G. Medical Exams

A physical examination is required for all new permanent employees and all seasonal employees assigned to arduous duty as firefighters prior to reporting for duty. A physical examination may be requested for a permanent employee by the supervisor if there is a question about the ability of an employee to safely complete one of the work capacity tests. All new permanent fire funded (9XXX) employees are required to have a physical examination. All permanent employees over 40 years of age who take the pack or field test to qualify for a wildland or prescribed fire position are required to take an annual physical examination before taking the test.

1. Physical examination shall use [Standard Form 78 \(SF-78\)](#), Certification of Medical Examination specific for arduous and moderate duty fire management activities and Form 1400-108 Physical Requirements for Firefighter and Smokejumper Positions (Supplement to SF-78).
2. All examinations are at Government expense and should be charged against the 9141 subactivity for preparedness personnel and 9263 and 9264 for dedicated prescribed fire personnel.
3. Completed physical examination forms requiring a second opinion are to be submitted through Personnel to the Chief, Division of Medical and Health Services, at the Department for certification of an employee's fitness for duty.

Each refuge may designate the examining physician, but must offer the individual an opportunity to submit medical documentation from his or her own personal physician. The Regional Fire Management Coordinator should audit medical examination costs periodically to avoid unnecessary expenditures.

If the Fire Management Officer or the employee has any question concerning the person's ability to physically perform firefighting duties, the employee should not be qualified for a wildland or prescribed fire position.